



LEE CARLSON CENTER™
For Mental Health & Well-Being
HOPE. HEALING. HEALTH.

February 27, 2023

Public Safety Committee Members
100 Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
Saint Paul, MN 55155

Dear Public Safety Committee Members,

Thank you for your service in support of Minnesota youth and families. Lee Carlson Center for Mental Health & Well-Being is writing in support of HF-1712 and has seen first-hand the impact that accessible mental health intervention and prevention has on the lives of families we serve in the North Metro, Anoka and Hennepin Counties.

Lee Carlson Center's mission is to provide exceptional and affordable mental health services for families, children, youth, and adults in our community. We were founded as a community mental health and 501c(3) charitable organization serving Anoka County in 1979. Our early focus was school support groups for at-risk youth. Today, Lee Carlson is the primary provider of outpatient mental health services in Anoka County, the North Metro, and surrounding areas, and has clinics located in Fridley, Brooklyn Center, Coon Rapids, and St. Louis Park. We serve more than 6,000 clients and their families annually through a vast range of services in home, clinic, and school settings, including providing innovative school-based mental health programs focused on early identification and ease of access for 65 schools across eight school districts. Lee Carlson is a leading provider of trauma-informed practices working with some of the community's most complex client needs in programs including Intensive Treatment in Foster Care (ITFC), School-Linked Mental Health (SLMH), Domestic Violence Services, Early Childhood Mental Health, and the Bridgeview Drop-In Center, which serves adults living with a diagnosis of serious and persistent mental illness (SPMI).

Lee Carlson Center partners closely with public safety departments in Fridley and in St. Louis Park to address the mental health needs of neighbors who lack primary care providers and utilize 911 and emergency rooms to manage symptoms. In addition to making mental health affordable for all through offering insurance

navigation, sliding scale or covered cost of care, Lee Carlson Center also strives to make it accessible with convenient clinic locations and through strong partnerships with school communities, public safety, and counties.

Throughout the organization's long history, we have seen firsthand the impact on children, youth and families that mental health intervention and prevention services have on the communities we serve. Lee Carlson Center provides individual and group therapy and psycho-education in partnership with our school districts, as well as peer support for families who have experienced domestic and gun violence, are in or at risk of foster care placement and to engender health relationships. A recent testimonial from a family Lee Carlson Center works with highlights the importance of accessible mental health support on their child's and family's ability to thrive and participate as a member of the learning and local community:

"He seems more at peace, thinking now there is a name for what he has, so he doesn't feel to weird or not normal- not his fault that he is feeling this way. We try to get him more involved at home asking him to do more things, he has been hanging around upstairs more than normal. He seems to want to try to do better in school. Thank you so much for making this care available and affordable, I can't tell how much that means to us. Thank you, thank you thank you!!!"

Our clients struggle with job loss, loss of health insurance and other circumstances that make mental health services inaccessible. HF -1712 would allow Lee Carlson Center to serve youth and families who need help, when they need it.

We know that if we can lessen the financial burden for individuals making life changing decisions between mental health care and rent or food and do this in a warm relational way they will be more likely to begin to receive the mental health services they need today before circumstances and symptoms get worse. We also know that helping clients not have to make a choice between food and other necessities and their mental health care can really alleviate the complex stressors and barriers that make recovery from mental illness that much more difficult when they simply shouldn't be. Lee Carlson Center knows that the investment in mental health support now will pay off not only in the short-term for individuals seeking support, but in the long-term with safe and thriving schools, neighborhoods and communities across the state.

Thank you for your past partnership in serving Minnesota youth and families.

With deepest gratitude,

Lee Carlson Center for Mental Health & Well-Being

Sarah Cafilisch

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Chief Development Officer

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